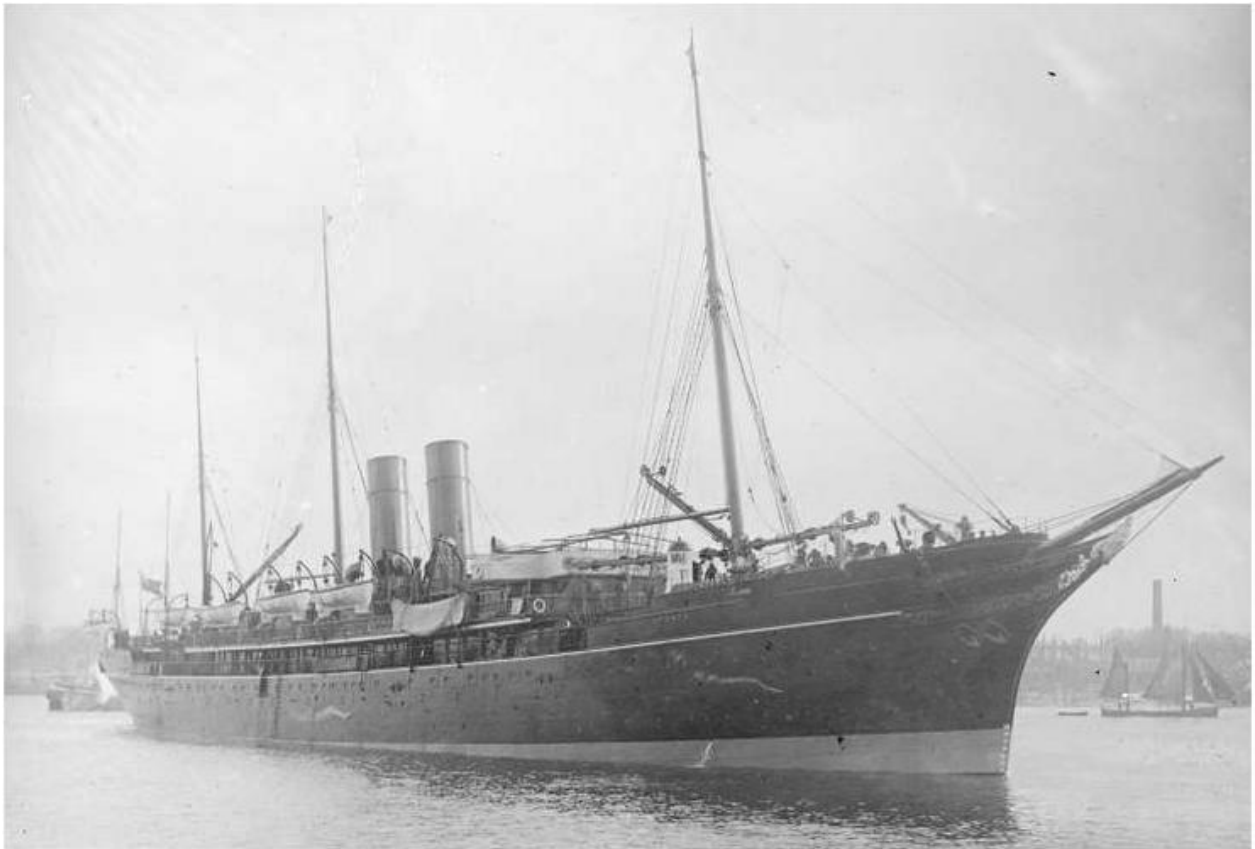


The Story of the HMS Viknor WW1

RMS Atrato was a UK steamship that was built in 1888 as a Royal Mail Ship and ocean liner for the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. In 1912 she was sold and became the cruise ship The Viking. Toward the end of 1914 she was requisitioned and converted into the armed merchant cruiser HMS Viknor. She sank in 1915 with all hands, a total of 295 Royal Navy officers and men.



Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve Loss Remembered

Archival Moment

January 13, 1915



Photo Credit: The Rooms Provincial Archives. A 11-165; Departure of the Newfoundland Detachment to the Great War (Naval Reservists embarking for England, 1914).

Most people associate the memorial at **Beaumont Hamel, France** with the Royal Newfoundland Regiment but the memorial also pays tribute to the men of Newfoundland and Labrador who served with the **Royal Navy**.

The Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial pays tribute to all those Newfoundlanders who served in the First World War and specifically commemorates those who have *no known graves*. Emblazed on a bronze table at Beaumont Hamel are the names of 24 seamen of the Newfoundland Division of the Royal Naval Reserve. These men died on **13 January 1915** in the sinking of the **HMS Viknor**.

The HMS Viknor was built in 1888 as the Atrato for the Royal Mail Steam Co. Ltd. The S/S Atrato was a beautifully designed passenger ship, more resembling a luxury yacht than a liner. She was used in the service between England and the West Indies and could carry up to 280 passengers. Bought by Viking Cruising Co. Ltd. in 1912, she was renamed Viking.

At the beginning of WWI, she was requisitioned by the Admiralty, equipped with armament and renamed **HMS Viknor**. She was mainly used as a cruising patrol ship.

On **13th January 1915**, while on patrol, she sank in heavy weather without any distress call. It was assumed that she was sunk by a mine, belonging to a minefield laid by the Germans. Not a

single soul of the 295 crew was saved. Many of the bodies were washed ashore days after the sinking.

Among the crew were 25 Newfoundlanders. 24 bodies were never found. The body of **Seaman John Bowen Mercer**, Age 21 ((1034X) Son of Thomas George Mercer and Elizabeth Mercer, of Bay Roberts washed ashore and is buried in the Colonsay Military Cemetery. Colonsay is an island in the Inner Hebrides of Scotland.



Photo Credit: The Rooms Provincial Archives. E 39 – 4. Naval Reservists

The 24 men of the Newfoundland Division of the Royal Naval Reserve lost in HMS Viknor are recorded at Beaumont Hamel.

1220X Seaman Enos Barnes. Age 33. Son of Matthew and Elizabeth Barnes; *husband* of Jessie Barnes, of **Port Union**.

1219X Seaman Albert Brace. Age 20. Son of Richard and Mary Brace, of Chance Cove, Trinity Bay.

1147X Seaman George Coates, age 29. Son of Philip and Emma Coates, of Fogo.

702X Seaman Gilbert Dyke, Age 23. Son of John Martin Dyke and Louisa Dyke, of Salvage Bay.

411X Seaman James Greening, Age 28. Son of Joseph and Jane Greening, of Summerville, Bonavista Bay.

2180X Seaman Thomas Jackson, Age 21. Son of Mrs. Alice Jackson, of Brigus, Port de Grave.

1218X Seaman Levi Jerrett; Age 23. Son of William and Mary Jerrett, of 90, Boyd's Lane, St. John's.

874X Seaman Albert Kelly, Age 24, Son John and Emmeline Kelly, Cupids, Conception Bay.

1213X Seaman Phillip Lewis, Age 20. Son of Frederick Lewis and Melina Reynolds of Caplin Cove, Bay de Verde.

1224X Seaman Alexander Martin, Age 23. Son of Rebecca Martin, of Battery Rd., St. John's.

1209X Seaman Frederick Morgan. Age 19. Son of Joseph Morgan, of Seal Cove, Conception Bay.

1190X Seaman William George Morgan, Age 17. Son of George Henry and Sarah Morgan, of Blow-me-down, Port de Grave.

932X John Parsons, Age 23. Son of John and Mary A. Parsons, of Shearstown.

901X Seaman Harry W Peach, Age 25. Son of William Henry and Elizabeth Peach; husband of Elsie May Brinson (formerly Peach), of Arnold's Cove, Placentia Bay.

706X Seaman Charles Ralph, Age 24. Son of Stephen and Leah Ralph, of **Flat Island, Bonavista Bay.**

1122X Seaman Charles Rowe, Age 21. Son of John and Ann Rowe, of Trinity.

1222X Seaman William St. Croix, Age 22. Son of Joseph and Esther St. Croix of Trepassey.

1227X Seaman Edward Smart, Age 19. Son of Samuel and Fanny Smart, of Saunder's Cove, Alexander Bay.

862X Seaman Eli Sparkes, 24. Son of Isaac and Mary J. Sparkes, Shearstown.

1259X Seaman George Stringer, Age 21. Son of William T. and Mary Ann Stringer, of **Little Heart's Ease, Random South.**

1214X Seaman Douglas Walsh, Age 20. Son of Mrs. Mary Ann Hutchings, of Cow Head, St. Barbe.

2179X Seaman Albert J Warren, Age 22. Son of Eli and Mary A. Warren, of Glovertown, Alexander Bay.

611X Seaman George Youden, Age 25. Son of Henry and Jessie Youden, of Bull Cove.

670X Seaman Thomas Youden, Age 26. Son of Henry and Jessie Youden, of Bull Cove. Husband of Alice Youden

During World War I approximately 2000 Newfoundland reservists served in the war effort; 180 men were killed in action. The reservists were not maintained as a unit but dispersed among the British Navy. The reservists also guarded the wireless station near Mount Pearl and manned the defence battery at Fort Waldegrave (reactivated summer 1916). In 1921 demobilization of the reservists was completed and the Royal Naval Reserve was disbanded.

In **Bowring Park, St. John's** the caribou memorial has replica plaques of the memorial plaques at Beaumont Hamel, they list 820 names of Newfoundland soldiers, seamen and sailors who died in WW1 and have no known graves. Before this replica was erected families and friends had to travel to Europe to pay tribute to their sacrifice. Remember the men of the HMS Viknor by visiting Bowring Park.

The Newfoundland Naval Reserve is also represented by a sailor holding a spyglass on the west wing of the Newfoundland National War Memorial on Water Street, St. John's. Give him a second look as you walk past and remember all of the young men of the HMS Viknor.

Recommended Archival Collection: At the Rooms Provincial Archives research the **Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve fonds . GB 1/3**. This collection consists of 17 volumes of personnel records for the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve (1900-1919). Records include applications for enrolment, naval service ledgers and registers of payment and retainers. Includes an alphabetical listing of reservists. Microfilm reproductions are available for research. Reel content is provided with item level descriptions.